

Capitol Experience: Are You Going?



Capitol Experience 2006 is a four-day conference in Lansing, March 19-22, which focuses on public policy and civic involvement. Participants choose a current public policy issue and interact with legislators, state agency staff, lobbyists, and others. This year's topics are juvenile crime, domestic violence, environmental concerns, and school/student issues.

Participants will learn how public policy is made and how they can influence its outcome, understand how decisions at the state level influence what happens in local communities, explore careers in public policy, and network with teens and professionals from across Michigan.

Capitol Experience is limited to 100 9th-12th graders and adult participant-chaperones. Previous attendees are ineligible. The cost will be \$220-255 depending on housing options. Applications are due at the Extension office by February 3, 2006.

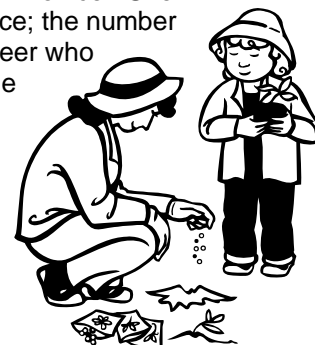
For more information, check out the Capitol Experience Web site at www.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/capexp, or talk to Christine Bingham and Lucy Cooper who attended the program in 2005. If you don't know Christine or Lucy, call the 4-H Office and we'll put them in touch with you.

Ask Whether A Master Gardener Is Right For You!

Do you want to do some gardening, but need some expertise to make the project successful? The Horticulture and Environmental Education Committee will match your club with a Master Gardener who wants to earn volunteer hours by working with youth. If you are interested in this kind of partnership, contact Anne Crotser at the 4-H office. She will need to know the following: The nature of the horticulture activity; when and where it will take place; the number and ages of the youth expected to be involved; and the name of the club leader/ screened volunteer who the Master Gardener should contact. Remember, a screened volunteer must be present while the Master Gardener is working with the club.

Let's Get Growing!

Anne Crotser will be offering her 6th Youth Gardening Teacher Training Monday March 6, 13, 20, and 27, 2006 from 6:15 to 9:00 at MSUE. 4-H adult volunteers and teen leaders age 16 and older are invited to enroll. The course will cover curricula and resources, administrative issues, teaching techniques and hands-on age-specific lessons. There will be a fee. A flyer with more information will be sent later this winter.



Exploration Days 2006

4-H Exploration Days will be held June 21-23, 2006. The event is for youth 11 and up and adult chaperons. The cost will be the same as last year: \$155 for full-time participants and \$80 for commuters. The theme this year is "Make Your Best Better." There'll be a spectacular fireworks show after the Thursday night dance.

The registration book will be available online in February and from our office by Mid-March. Submit your registration to the 4-H office by May 5th. Keep informed by visiting the Exploration Days website at www.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/expodays.html.

You're Invited to the County Awards & Leader Recognition Banquet

The banquet will be held on January 25, 2006 at the Macomb ISD located south of Hall Road on Garfield. The Banquet will start at 6 p.m. sharp. Nominees are free, but there will be a \$6/person cost for others to attend. Everyone is invited and don't forget to RSVP by January 10th! *Invitations will not be mailed.*

Thanks!!

Thank you to all of the following volunteers for spending one evening in November judging the County Award applications: Kathi Kuschel, Shelley Riebel, Rose Gianferrara, Sue Schoenherr, Nancy Duemling, Lori Riggs, Jean Bingham, Faye Cerku, Mike DeFour and Alayne Waterstraat. Without volunteers like you, programs like County Awards would not be possible. THANKS!!!

Club & Committee News -----

Dog Project Members Promote 4-H At Children's Health Fair

On October 22, fifteen 4-H dog project members from K-9 and Kompany, Creative Canines, Poochez-N-Pals, and Northern Macomb spent afternoon providing dog agility demonstrations, handing out treats, and promoting 4-H to attendees at the Macomb County Children's Health Fair. Parents and leaders staffed an information table with displays of 4-H programs.

The event, sponsored by the County Health Department, offers information for children and their parents about many programs for youth in the area. Vision, hearing, and other screenings are also provided. The fair had a Halloween theme, and 4-H members were able to participate in the costume parade.

Club Officer Training

Seventy-two youth and adult volunteers attended the 2005 Club Officer Training on November 15th. After pizza and salad, Eileen Haraminac, MSUE's Nutrition Educator, spoke to the participants. Her presentation, entitled "Pizza, Pop, and the Pyramid" focused on making wise food choices in an era of processed foods with high sugar and fat content. Participants were given copies of the new U.S.D.A. Food Pyramid and everyone learned how to use nutrition labels to make product comparisons. Another exercise focused on how to make better choices when eating out.

After Eileen's presentation, there were four breakout sessions for the various club offices. Kathy Jamieson led the training for Secretaries. Tina Fleming reviewed procedures for Treasurer's and their adult assistants. Anne Crotser spoke to Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and Sergeants-at-Arms about democratic procedures and orderly meetings. Teen Leaders Christine Bingham and Jenna Lotan talked about club scrapbooks and guided Historians and Reporters through the process of writing a press release. The evening ended with an ice cream social.

Horse Banquet Success

On November 13, 2005, the Horse Program Committee held the annual Horse Banquet at Zuccaro's in Clinton Township where 4-H'ers were honored for their participation in the 2004-2005 4-H horse show season. There were over 200 attendees at the banquet, who had mini horses to light horses, lead liners to gamers, Western and English, on the ground, in the saddle or in a cart. The food was good, the door prize drooled over, the slide show fantastic. It was a great year, and a great banquet. Thank you to all who helped to make it such a great success.

Upcoming Events -----

4-H Communications Day

Young people ages 9-19 are invited to share what they're learning at the Michigan 4-H Communications Day. The objectives of Michigan 4-H Communications Day are to allow youth to share ideas and demonstrate their skills and knowledge about topics and issues that interest them; to provide opportunities for youth to practice and strengthen their communication skills; to help youth gain self-confidence, persuasiveness and the ability to convey ideas, concepts and information; and to recognize youth who excel in communication skills.

For more information, visit www.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/commday.html. The event will be held on February 11, 2006 at MSU. Please contact the 4-H Office by January 13, 2006.

4-H Children's Art Exchange

Every year, through the Michigan 4-H Children's Art Exchange, kindergartners to sixth graders are invited to send "visual letters" to children their own ages in China. Teaching kits are available to facilitate teaching about China and about making art. This is a great way to experience art from another culture.

Each kit includes a variety of art that Chinese youth have created to share with youth in the United States. Later in the year, a selection of Michigan artwork will be sent to China as a gift to the children of China. The deadline for submitting artwork to the County 4-H Office is April 1, 2006. To view artwork from 2005, go to <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/michart05/index.html>. The teaching kit will be available in Macomb County from January-April 2006. For more information or to request a kit, contact Christine Miller at (586) 469-6431.

4-H Plant Science & Entomology Workshop

Gear up for a great growing season by learning about gardening, bugs and technology, as well as about crafts with bugs and plants. Held at Kettunen Center in Tustin, Michigan, from March 24-26, the workshop is open to adult volunteers and 4-Hers ages 12 and up. Registration will begin in February. Contact Anne Crotser at (586) 469-6431 for more information.

4-H Ice Fishing Derby



February 26, 2006
Details coming soon!

4th Annual Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference

February 2-4, 2006
Bavarian Inn Lodge
& Conference Center
Frankenmuth, MI

*Program will feature David Kohl,
Mike Hutjens, Tom Overton,
Mike VanAmberg & Ray Nebel*

- Hoof trimming workshop with Jan Shearer
- Breed association annual meetings
- MI Dairy Ambassador Program
- Commercial heifer & ET sales
- Women's program

Join fellow dairy producers to learn and network with fellow producers and industry professionals. Bring your family! Early registration deadline: January 20, 2006. For more information call Brian at (517) 278-3119 or Sara at (989) 834-9656 or go to www.gldc.msu.edu.

Upcoming Events (continued) -----

4-H Veterinary Science Workshop

The 4-H Veterinary Science Teen and Adult Leader Workshop will be held at Kettunen Center on February 24 and 25, 2006. Participants will explore animal systems and learn about animal health by sharing information and experiences while interacting with veterinarians. They can also participate in hands-on demonstrations designed to help members recognize healthy, sick or injured animals. Meet 4-Hers who have developed outstanding veterinary science projects and gain ideas to help others start their own vet science projects. This workshop will be open to teen and adult volunteers ages 13 and up. Registration will begin in January. Contact Christine Miller at (586) 469-6431 for more information.

4-H Beef, Sheep & Swine Workshop

If you're interested in beef cattle, sheep or swine projects, this workshop is for you. You'll learn about animal health, management, care and nutrition. In addition, you can sharpen your livestock judging and evaluation skills. By sharing ideas and interacting with others, you'll find ways to improve your county 4-H livestock program. The workshop also offers ways to enhance your communication and teaching skills, and to learn about the many opportunities available for those interested in beef cattle, sheep or swine projects. This workshop will be held at Kettunen Center on February 25 and 26, 2006 and will be open to adult and teen volunteers age 13 and up. Registration will begin in January. Contact Christine Miller at (586) 469-6431 for details.

4-H Environmental & Outdoor Education Workshop

Enjoy fun, hands-on Environmental and Outdoor Education (EOE) activities taught in a train-the-trainer format at Kettunen Center on March 4-5, 2006. Camp counselor training will also be a component of this workshop. Leave with many ideas and a wealth of resources to share locally. Many different 4-H EOE curricula will be featured and distributed. Session topics will feature environmental stewardship, wildlife, forest and water study, land use education, and outdoor recreation and leadership. Don't miss this chance to learn what 4-H has to offer in these areas! Open to adults and youth ages 13 and up. Registration will begin in late January. Contact Tina Fleming at (586) 469-6431 for more information.

4-H Family Weekend: Journey to the Deep Blue Sea

On March 18-19, 2006, journey to new adventures and depths of the world's greatest natural resource, water! Learn about marine ecology, as your family compares the needs, niche, adaptations, relationships and habitats of animals from different ocean environments. The weekend is designed for families to share time together while learning, discovering, and having fun! This workshop, held at Kettunen Center, is very hands-on and encourages family togetherness and is designed for families with children aged 5 to 12. Registration will begin around early February. Contact Tina Fleming at (586) 469-6431 for more information.

4-H Companion Animal Workshop

The 4-H Companion Animal Workshop will take place April 22-23, 2006 at Kettunen Center. It is open to 4-H youth and adult volunteers who have an interest in the 4-H Companion Animal project area and activities (dogs, cats, pocket pets, birds and reptiles). Tentative workshop sessions may include obedience, freestyle, 4-H club development, K-9 dressage, grooming, pocket pets, Rally O, dumbbell training, feline sessions, and more. The cost for this workshop is \$32 per person. Participants must register with the MSU Extension 4-H Office by April 7th. Contact Anne Crotser at (586) 469-6431 for more information.

MICHIGAN WEEK YOUTH PHOTO CONTEST

All Michigan youth, aged 9-19 as of January 1, 2006, are invited to participate in the 2006 Michigan Week Youth Photo Contest. Youth are asked to photograph a favorite Michigan Historic site that is at least 50 years old or older. A site can be a building (such as a barn or factory); a structure (such as a bridge); an area (such as a neighborhood or business district); or a place significant in history (such as an Underground Railroad Station). Youth may submit up to two photos. Photo entries are due February 1, 2006. The Michigan Week Youth Photo Contest is coordinated by Michigan 4-H Youth Development and the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries (HAL). Twelve photos will be selected to tour Michigan from June 2006 through June 2007. Twenty-four photos will be selected as regional winning photos. All 36 photos will be on the HAL website for one year. Thousands of people visit this site annually. The 2006 Michigan Week will be held May 20-26. For more information about this contest, go to the 2006 Michigan Week website at <http://www.michigan.gov/michiganweek>, or call Christine Miller at (586) 469-6431.

GRANTS AVAILABLE

The 2006 4-H Community Tree Planting Grant Program offers a limited number of youth grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,750 to 4-H/Extension groups at local, county and state levels. This program provides opportunities for youth and adults to participate in ongoing community tree planting and/or reforestation projects or to stimulate new and creative youth-led projects. Youth are empowered to lead the planning, implementation, and evaluation process with minimal mentorship from adults. Youth will learn how their leadership can result in community collaborations that amplify the impact of their project. The application can be found at <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/GrantsTreePlanting.aspx> under "Related Links." Completed applications are due on Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2006. If you have any questions, e-mail schaconas@fourhcouncil.edu.

State 4-H Rabbit & Cavy Show

February 4, 2006
MSU Pavilion
East Lansing, MI

Open to all
Michigan 4-H
members
ages 9-19 as of
January 1, 2006.

Entry fee:
\$2.75/class
Register on
day of show.

Contact your
club leader or
MSUE at (586)
469-6431 for an
event catalog.

Ray's Riding Rascals 26th Annual Tack Sale

Saturday,
March 4, 2006
11 a.m.-4 p.m.

Berville Lions
Field Hall
13651 Hough
Berville, MI

Consignments welcome

(Items for consignment may be brought to the hall on March 3rd from 6-8 p.m. or on March 4th from 8-9:30 a.m.)

Sell or buy anything for the horse or rider!

*Proceeds will benefit
Ray's Riding Rascals
4-H Club*

Information:
Al Rinke
(248) 969-0266
After 7 p.m.

Mentor News

January is National Mentoring Month

President Bush and Governor Granholm have pronounced January as "National Mentoring Month". National Mentoring Month focuses national attention on the need for mentors, as well as how each of us as individuals, business, government agencies, schools, faith communities, and nonprofits can work together to increase the number of mentors and assure brighter futures for our young people. Research has shown that volunteer mentors can play a powerful role in reducing drug abuse and youth violence, while greatly enhancing a young person's prospects for leading a healthy and productive life.

Macomb Michigan State University Extension will be celebrating its third National Mentoring Month Event on January 20, 2006. MSUE and the mentees in our program will recognize the hard work and dedication of our mentors and the tremendous impact they have had on their mentees.

Notes From the 4-H Office

Newsletter Mailing Notice



Because of the need to cut postage costs, the 4-H Family Notes Newsletter will be mailed only to families without e-mail beginning in January 2006. Those who have supplied e-mail addresses will receive a link to the online version of the newsletters via e-mail.

The online version of the newsletter is also available at <http://macombcountymi.gov/msuextension> by clicking on "4-H Youth Development" then on "4-H Clubs" and then on "Newsletters." If you have any questions about this new policy, please call the 4-H office at (586) 469-6431 or send e-mail to macomb.4h@macombcountymi.gov.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

County Events

January

- 1 Office Closed
- 5 Companion Animals Prg. Comm. meeting, 6:30 p.m., MSUE
- 9 Outdoor Ed. & Rec. Prg. Comm. mtg., 7 p.m.
- 10 Hort. & Envir. Ed. Prg. Comm. mtg., 6:30 p.m., MSUE
- 11 4-H Council meeting, 6:30 p.m., MISD Room 103B
- 12 Livestock Prg. Comm. meeting, 7 p.m., Armada High School
- 16 Office closed
- 17 PEP meeting, 6:30 p.m., VerKuilen Bldg.
- 18 Communication & Exp. Arts Prg. Comm. meeting, 6:30 p.m., MSUE
- 23 Horse Prg. Comm. mtg., 7 p.m., Camp Rotary
- 23 Livestock Sale Comm. meeting, 7 p.m., Armada High School
- 25 County Awards Banquet, 6 p.m., MISD, Room 103B

February

- 2 Companion Animals Prg. Comm. mtg., 6:30 p.m., MSUE
- 5 Steer Tagging, 12-2 p.m., Armada Fairgrounds
- 9 Livestock Prg. Comm. mtg., 7 p.m., Armada High School
- 13 Outdoor Ed. & Rec. Prg. Comm. mtg., 7 p.m.
- 14 Hort. & Envir. Ed. Prg. Comm. mtg., 6:30 p.m., MSUE
- 15 Communication & Exp. Arts Prg. Comm. meeting, 6:30 p.m., MSUE
- 20 Office closed
- 26 Ice Fishing Derby
- 27 Horse Prg. Comm. mtg., 7 p.m., Camp Rotary

County Events (continued)

March

- 2 Companion Animals Prg. Comm. mtg., 6:30 p.m., MSUE
- 4 Ray's Riding Rascals Tack Sale, 11 a.m., Berville Lions Field Hall
- 6, 13, 20 & 27 Youth Gardening Teacher Training, MSUE
- 8 Communication & Exp. Arts Prg. Comm. meeting, 6:30, MSUE
- 9 Livestock Prg. Comm. mtg., 7 p.m., Armada High School
- 13 Outdoor Ed. & Rec. Prg. Comm. mtg., 7 p.m.
- 18 4-H Arts & Crafts Workshop

State & National Events

January

- 13-15 Peer Plus, Group Dynamite & YEA Workshop, Kettunen Center

February

- 1 MI Week Youth Photo Contest entry deadline
- 4 State 4-H Rabbit & Cavy Show, MSU
- 11 4-H Communications Day, MSU
- 24-25 4-H Veterinary Science Workshop, Kettunen Center
- 25-26 4-H Beef, Sheep & Swine Workshop, Kettunen Center

March

- 18-19 4-H Family Weekend, Kett. Ctr.
- 19-22 4-H Capitol Experience, Lansing
- 24-26 4-H Plant Science & Entomology Workshop, Kettunen Center

Macomb County 4-H Staff

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County Extension Director

Kathy Jamieson
4-H Youth Agent

Tina Fleming
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<http://macombcountymi.gov/msuextension>

**HAPPY NEW YEAR
FROM THE 4-H STAFF!!**

MSU Extension programs & materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status or family status. MSU, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Macomb County Board of Commissioners cooperating. MSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution. The 4-H name & emblem are protected under 18 U.S.C. 707.



Information To Improve Your Selection and Use Of Foods In Your Home



WANTED: Stronger Bones!

Volume XVII

During the growing years of childhood, our bodies are building and rebuilding bone daily. How much we build depends on many things, especially diet and exercise. Calcium, a mineral found in many foods, helps the body build strong bones. If you don't get enough calcium as a child, your bones will not become strong enough to support you later possibly causing osteoporosis later in life. To build strong bones, children need plenty of calcium for their growing bodies every day.

Most babies and toddlers get plenty of calcium from breast milk and formula. But after age three, many kids don't. Most children CAN get the calcium they need from their diet without taking a supplement. Just three cups of milk a day provide enough calcium for children under nine. You can help your child get calcium by serving cereal with milk for breakfast, and a cup of milk with lunch and dinner. Another option is foods fortified with extra calcium, like frozen waffles, cereals and juice. Yogurt, pudding and cheese make great high-calcium snacks. Other healthy finger-foods are broccoli or other vegetables with yogurt dip. Fruit smoothies made with milk, ice cream or frozen yogurt are a good source of calcium. In families where parents drink milk, children tend to have a higher calcium intake.

Exercise is also important for healthy bones. Children who are active stay healthier and have stronger bones throughout life than those who are inactive.

All-around good nutrition is essential for children to become as strong, smart and healthy as they can be in their growing years. The food guide pyramid (Mypyramid.gov) is an easy-to-use guide for selecting healthy foods that fit your family's lifestyle and tastes. Think of the food groups: Milk, Meat, Fruits, Vegetables and Grains as you plan your family's diet, and try to choose high-calcium foods from each group. Remember, your nine to 12 year olds need 1,300 mg of calcium per day, more than two to three servings of milk. Starting healthy habits at a young age can make a big difference to their bones throughout life.



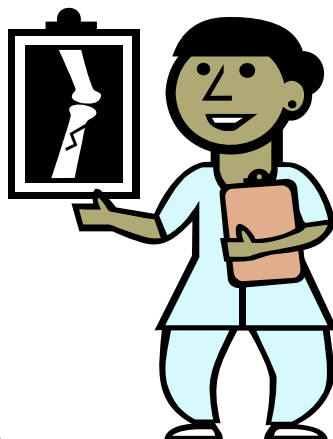
WORD WISE

PUMPKIN BARS

Osteoporosis

A disease in which the bones become extremely porous, are subject to fracture, and heal slowly, occurring especially in women following menopause and often leading to curvature of the spine from vertebral collapse.

Source: Dictionary.com



Ingredients:

2 cup all-purpose flour	1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
1 cup sugar	1/2 tsp ground cloves
2 tsp ground cinnamon	1/2 tsp vanilla extract
2 tsp baking powder	1 can (15 oz) pumpkin
2 tsp baking soda	3/4 c applesauce
3/4 tsp salt	1 cup raisins
4 eggs	



Directions: Preheat the oven to 350°. Grease a jelly-roll pan (a 15-inch baking sheet with sides). Stir first eight (dry) ingredients in large bowl to blend. Add vanilla extract, pumpkin, eggs and applesauce. Beat until well blended. Mix in raisins. Spread batter in prepared pan. Bake 20 to 25 min or until tester inserted into center comes out clean. Remove from oven and allow to cool on a rack. Cut into 24 squares.

Per serving: 1 g fiber, 1 g total fat, 108 calories

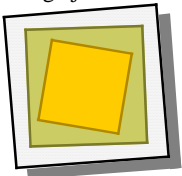
Source: Wellness Kitchen

Color, Shape and Size in the Kitchen

Your kitchen is filled with many wonderful foods and cooking tools in a variety of colors, sizes and shapes. It is the perfect laboratory for exploring some of the first topics children learn in school: color, shape and size. Understanding these concepts is important because your child uses them in observing, comparing and discussing all she sees and encounters. The ability to notice, use and voice similarities and differences are at the heart of beginning math, science and reading skills. So take a look around your kitchen and try the ideas below, or your own, to see how many different ways you and your child can celebrate these three basic concepts with food!

Color

Have an orange meal. One way to focus on a particular color is to have an entire meal that is the same color. This will help your child to not only focus on learning the name of a particular color, but also it will help her see the many different shades of a particular color. For example, not all oranges are the same shade! As you and your child prepare the meal, discuss the differences she notices in the colors. Are some dark and some light? Which foods have other colors mixed in? For an orange meal, consider serving macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, carrot sticks and orange juice.



Shape

Eat a square meal. We have all heard of the importance of eating a square meal of healthy foods, but why not have a really "square" meal? Serve waffles (big and little squares) with a side dish of pineapple chunks for breakfast. Have a snack of square cheese slices on square crackers placed on a square napkin. As you are preparing and enjoying your meals, ask your child to notice the similarities and differences between the different squares. Help her notice that all the squares have four sides, but can be various sizes. For a fun challenge, give your child a slice of pre-cheese. As she unwraps it, ask her how she can fold her cheese square into a triangle (point wrapped American to point).

Make shape kebobs. Patterning is an important part of learning how to use shapes mathematically. Experiences with patterns help your child understand the concept of a number line. You and your child can use stick skewers to make a repeating shape kebab pattern with square pineapple cubes, banana rounds and triangles cut out of melon pieces. Ask your child to say the shape names as you skewer your fruit kebabs, repeating the "square-circle-triangle" pattern along the stick. Voicing the pattern helps your child hear and feel the pattern, as well as see it.

Size

Bake little, medium and big cookies. Use graduated-size (small, medium, large) star-shaped cookie cutters to make simple sugar cookies from your favorite recipe. Ask your child to line up the cookies for icing in the order of their size. You will be asking her to use the math skill of *seriating* — core to understanding the number line. Ask your child, "What size is this cookie? Which is the largest cookie?"



Have a taste test to compare foods in various sizes, such as regular and cherry tomatoes, miniature squash and

CHECK YOUR LABEL

Calcium Facts

Don't be fooled! Always check the label for calcium because you can't make assumptions about the amount of calcium in specific food categories. Example: the amount of calcium in milk, whether skim or whole, is generally the same per serving, whereas the amount of calcium in the same size yogurt container (8 oz) can vary from 20 to 45

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (236ml)	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 80	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol Less than 5mg	0%
Sodium 120mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 11g	4%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 11g	
Protein 9g	17%
Vitamin A 10%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium 30%	Iron 0% Vitamin D 25%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	

FOOD NUTRITION HOTLINE

MSU Extension provides a General Nutrition Hotline for county residents, (586) 469-5060.

Jane Smith staffs the Hotline, and is available M-W-F from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. to answer general food/nutrition questions and provide information about food safety and food preservation, such as canning and freezing.

We also provide to county residents testing of pressure canning equipment. Residents will be required to leave the lid of the unit for testing and return in 2 days to pick up their equipment. No fee is charged for county residents.



ideas for parents

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET #22: School Engagement

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they are actively engaged in learning.

64%
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. "School engagement" is one of five commitment to learning assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States.

Where Learning Leads

Young people may be surprised by where their learning and their interests can lead.

A 13-year-old loved playing with children. She often organized play groups on her neighborhood block, and she enjoyed home economics, human development, and art at school. When she turned 16 and wanted to work part time, her parents and her teachers encouraged her to apply to the city parks and recreation department.

As a parks and recreation coordinator, she found she could earn money and do what she enjoyed best: being and playing with kids.

The next summer, she learned clowning and traveled from park to park on her bike to entertain kids. The following year, she teamed up with other creative high school students to design a puppet wagon for the parks and recreation department.

Soon other cities were interested in creating a puppet program like the one these three young women developed. As first-year college students, the three spoke to these



communities and showed them how to get a program started.

These opportunities gave the youth chances to see how learning relates to every aspect of life and how it even affects career possibilities. In fact, one member of the group majored in child development in college, and opened a day-care center after she graduated. Another runs programs in an inner-city YMCA. A third enjoyed writing scripts so much, she became a writer.

Helpful Hints

Tips that help your child engage with her or his school:

- **Help your child be alert by getting enough sleep, eating well, and coping with difficulties.**
- **Set expectations for learning at school.**
- **Respond immediately when you hear about problems (even small ones) that arise at school. Talk with the teacher(s) right away.**
- **Make your home an engaging learning place.**

time together

Three ways to help your child become engaged in school:

1. Ask which subject your child enjoys most at school. Together create "learning games" to enjoy learning more about that subject.
2. With subjects in which your child shows little interest, find something that piques her or his curiosity and build on that.
3. Involve your child in hobbies and interests that you enjoy.

Learning Resolutions

Think of each day as a new beginning, a new day to learn. While our society tends to set New Year's resolutions on January 1, you can encourage the building of this asset in your child by acting on learning resolutions every day. Consider:

- **Doing new and old hobbies with your children.**
- **Learning a new skill together, such as swimming, car maintenance, or gardening.**
- **Researching a culture you're unfamiliar with (such as the country of Palau) and learning about some of that culture's customs.**
- **Finding a piece of cardboard and creating your own family board game.**
- **Investigating together things you're curious about.**

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- *How important is learning to you?*
- *In what ways does your school get you excited about learning?*
- *How can we make learning more interesting and adventuresome?*

Quick Tip:
Home learning excitement leads to school engagement.

Form a Partnership

Think of your child's teacher(s) and yourself as partners in your child's education.

Work together to ensure that learning is stimulating and engaging at school and at home.



More Stuff You Can Use

Your Child's Growing Mind. This invaluable resource gives tips for guiding your child's learning from birth through the teen years. (Available from Doubleday, 1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036-4094; 1-800-223-6834.)

Final Word

"Families are the first and most important influence on children's learning and development and have the most enduring impact on their life course."

—Carnegie Task Force on Learning, *Years of Promise*

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